





# SLOW DOWN

Take your foot  
off the gas at the  
beautifully lazy  
Crillon le Brave in  
Provence

BY ROBERT CHILTON



← Crillon le Brave is dotted with quiet corners that are ideal for a drink and a moment of contemplation

**M**aybe it's the clean Provencal air. Maybe it's the lavender fields. Or maybe it's the calming mossy green colour of the walls in the rooms. Hmmm...

It's hard to pinpoint exactly what it is that produces such soporific feelings of tranquillity and peace at Crillon le Brave in the south of France. But whatever it is, it certainly does the trick.

Located 40 kilometres north-east of Avignon, Crillon le Brave is best reached from Nice airport two hours away, which offers direct flights to Dubai.

The luxurious and super stylish hotel is in fact a cluster of eight beautiful old houses that form a sleepy little village connected by mini courtyards where life goes at a very south of France kind of pace. Inside the collection of houses are 36 rooms and three new suites. Next door in Place de l'église is a lovely old church whose bell gently stirs guests awake.

Breakfast on the terrace is a fabulously rustic affair. We particularly liked the individual mini Kilner jars of scrambled eggs that, we suspect, had been made with more than a knob of butter. Grab

a newspaper and a pastry, order a cafetière of coffee and start the day the French way. Then, if your brain can be coaxed into life, plan your day in this part of France that has been luring besotted tourists for decades.

Crillon le Brave re-opened in late February after a winter break and is ideally suited as a base from which you can explore gems such as Gordes, Lourmarin, Menerbes, Avignon and the antique market paradise of L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue.

Wherever you choose to stop, you will of course eat great food - this is France, remember. Crillon le Brave more than holds its own in the cuisine department with two excellent restaurants.

Bistrot 40K is a casual, farmhouse sort of place which serves food sourced within a 40km radius of the hotel - hence the name. Before getting cosy at one of the tables, check out the large map on the old stone wall that's dotted with pins to show the location of local farms and what foods





←  
Cosy Provencal rooms in March start at AED 1,400 for bed and breakfast



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Below: The peaceful terrace at Crillon le Brave overlooks vineyards and the hotel's pool  
Bottom: Bistrot 40K champions local produce



through frenzied crowds after crashing his bike. Blizzards and extreme winds

## The giant of Provence

As you sit on Crillon le Brave's terrace, nibbling a croissant and sipping your second coffee of the morning, you won't fail to notice the mountain that dominates the Provencal skyline.

The legendary Mont Ventoux induces fear in Tour de France cyclists like no other mountain in the sport. French writer and philosopher Roland Barthes called it "a god of evil, a despot of cyclists."

In last year's Tour de France, Chris Froome famously ran up the slope

(the highest speed ever recorded at the summit is 320kmh) have claimed the lives of some, while British rider Tom Simpson (above) died during his ascent of Ventoux in the 1967 Tour de France. The monument to the tragic cycling hero is now a popular point of pilgrimage for cyclists.

If you're feeling adventurous – and fit – you can hire a bike at Crillon le Brave and attempt the 1,910m climb yourself. A chart in the hotel records those who have managed to make the ascent. Or you could just admire the view and order another coffee.

they supply to the restaurant. If you want to eat authentic Provencal cuisine you're in the right place.

Restaurant Jérôme Blanchet, meanwhile, is a fancier dining destination that offers a seasonal menu of a la carte options or a seven-course tasting menu. It's fine dining, but with an informal atmosphere.

If you've been exploring the region in a cramped hire car, a treatment can be had at Crillon le Brave's spa in the old stables. EDGAR tried a 30-minute deep tissue massage (AED 240) from Pauline that removed all the tension of driving on French roads.

A new feature of the hotel is the 'coin tranquille' - an adults only deck near the pool. However, this isn't the sort of place where kids run around yelling so the main pool will do just fine, especially with its most extraordinary, uninterrupted views of the vineyards below and the famous Mont Ventoux in the distance.

You'll see plenty of cyclists setting out in the morning to tackle the iconic mountain so wave them off with a cheery 'bonne chance!' as you find a pool-side lounge and have a snooze before lunch. Well, after all, you've had a busy morning.

[crillonlebrave.com](http://crillonlebrave.com)